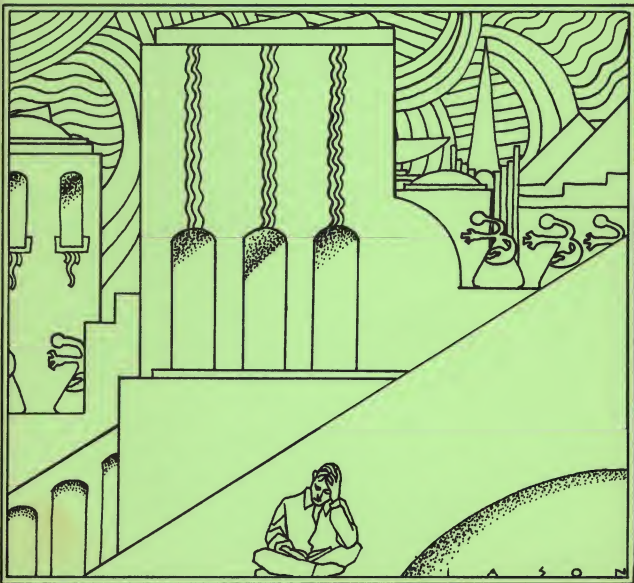


LOVECRAFT STUDIES

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Volume IV, No. 1

Spring 1985

Published April 1, 1985

Cover by Jason Eckhardt

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Lovecraft Studies is published twice a year, in Spring and in Fall. Price per issue is \$4.00 in U.S. funds. Orders should be sent to the publisher, Necronomicon Press, 101 Lockwood Street, West Warwick, RI 02893.

Contributions should be sent to the editor, S. T. Joshi, % Necronomicon Press, and must be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope if return is desired. All reviews are assigned. Literary rights for articles and reviews will reside with *Lovecraft Studies* for one year after publication, at which time they shall revert to the respective authors. Payment is made in contributor's copies.

Notes on the Prose Realism of H. P. Lovecraft

by Steven J. Mariconda



he strength and coherence of H. P. Lovecraft's philosophy was such that it pervaded every branch of his literary output—essays, letters, poetry and fiction alike. It has often been noted that Lovecraft's infamous pantheon of "gods"—actually primal beings incomprehensible and indifferent to human beings—is a fictional reflection of his materialistic conception of a purposeless universe governed by a fixed and only partially knowable set of laws. For example, Lovecraft's conviction that "the cosmos is a mindless vortex; a seething ocean of blind forces"¹ is brilliantly symbolized by the "blind idiot god, Azathoth, Lord of All Things", who sprawls at the center of Ultimate Chaos "encircled by his flopping horde of mindless and amorphous dancers."² But if Lovecraft's outlook dictated his fiction's themes, it also implicitly influenced his stylistic approach; for the realistic narrative voice and detail found in his tales may likewise be traced to his philosophical stance. Lovecraft's rationalistic world-view eliminated the possibility of religion, since scientific evidence mitigated against the existence of God and caused him to seek another imaginative outlet—one which supplemented rather than contradicted reality. This imaginative outlet was fantasy fiction. Fantasy fiction of a certain type only, however, would satisfy him; a type in which reality was first convincingly and accurately portrayed before the "supplementing" took place. The need for such portrayal was the primary force behind Lovecraft's prose realism.

The influences upon Lovecraft's rendering of this prose realism may be roughly classed into two groups. One group is those writers whom he more or less consciously took as models; horror authors such as Edgar Allan Poe and (to a lesser extent) Hawthorne, M. R. James, and Bierce, who had likewise anchored their tales in realistic detail. Poe left him a far broader legacy than the others mentioned; for Lovecraft's psychological realism, in which the terrible mental reaction of a character (usually the first-person narrator) to the horror is documented by the use of vocabulary and syntax, is derived from his early favorite.

The second influence is far more subtle, and one over which Lovecraft

¹Lovecraft, *Selected Letters* (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1965-76; 5 vols.), I, pp. 156. Further references are in the text, abbreviated as SL.

²Lovecraft, "The Haunter of the Dark" (1935), in *The Dunwich Horror and Others* (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1963), p. 115. Further references to this volume are in the text, abbreviated as DH. Textual errors in the Arkham House editions of the fiction cited here have, where possible, been silently corrected from transcriptions provided by S. T. Joshi.

himself in some ways had very little control. Lovecraft's style was shaped by youthful influences exceedingly apt to its later role of fostering the believability of his narratives. His prose was a product primarily of his avid early reading of eighteenth-century essayists, historians, and scientists. These writers, employing vocabulary and syntax which seems pedantic to the modern reader, lent Lovecraft exactly the erudite tone and precision of style necessary for him to delineate realistic scenes with an authority and convincingness which instills in the reader a subtle sense of confidence. This sense of confidence leaves us especially vulnerable for the supernormal intrusion of horror at the end. The irony here is that Lovecraft's style was influenced by exactly the "right" writers for its later purpose.

So while Lovecraft willfully followed and expanded upon the approach of Poe and certain other "supernatural realists", the influence of the eighteenth-century prose stylists became an unconscious, inherent part of the fabric of Lovecraft's writing. It is the element which is constant in all Lovecraft's prose; be it letters, essays, or fiction. We will briefly return to these two influences later; first let us look more closely at the philosophic basis of Lovecraft's inclination towards prose realism in weird fiction.

Writing weird fiction gave Lovecraft an essential "imaginative refuge" from what he viewed as a directionless cosmos. He felt that

objective phenomena—endless and predictable repetitions of the same old stuff over and over again—form only the very beginning of what is needed to keep [a] sense of significance, harmony, and personal adjustment to infinity satisfied. All sensitive men have to call in unreality in some form or other or go mad from ennui. That is why religion continues to hang on. . . . (SL III.139)

Lovecraft's objectivity, however, prevented him from embracing religion as the solution to his dilemma, since he saw religion as "insulting to the intellect in its outright denial of plain facts and objective probabilities" and as having "no foundation in reality" (SL III.139f.). Thus, left to his own devices by his unyielding rationalism, Lovecraft turned to that form of "unreality" to which he had been inclined since his youth: the creation of imaginative fiction. However, he found that this fiction, in order to be satisfying, had to be firmly rooted in the real world and must not contradict what we know to be true about it:

I do not share the real mystic's contempt for facts and objective conditions, even though I fail to find them interesting and satisfying. On the contrary, I am forced to respect them highly, and allow for them in every system of imaginative refuge I formulate. . . . I get no kick at all from postulating what isn't so, as religionists and idealists do. . . . My big kick comes from taking reality just as it is—accepting all the limitations of the most orthodox science—and then permitting my symbolising faculty to build outward from the existing facts; rearing a struc-

ture of *indefinite promise and possibility* whose *topless towers* are in no cosmos or dimension penetrable by the *contradicting-power* of the *tyrannous and inexorable intellect*. But the whole secret of the kick is that *I know damn well it isn't so* (SL III.140).

In concluding that the fantastic element of his fiction had to "*supplement, rather than contradict, reality*" (SL III.140), Lovecraft set himself the task of creating as realistic a background as possible for his tales. The degree of his success is attested to by our reaction to such tales as *At the Mountains of Madness*, where the central events of the story seem frighteningly plausible. Lovecraft laid the foundation for his best tales with a verisimilitude approaching that of the "true" school of literary realists. His dictum that "No avenue can lead us away from the immediate to the remote unless it really does begin at the immediate—and not any false, cheap, or conventional conception of the immediate" (SL III.195) echoes in the very convincingness of his best work, from "The Rats in the Walls" to "The Shadow out of Time".

Paramount among what I will term the conscious influences on Lovecraft's rendering of prose realism was his "God of Fiction", Edgar Allan Poe. Lovecraft lauded Poe for establishing "a new standard of realism in the annals of literary horror", and followed his example of "consummate craftsmanship"³ by carefully researching and laying out the background for his tales. A good example of Poe's background realism is "The Gold Bug", with its descriptions not only of Sullivan's Island but of the intricacies of cryptography and etymology. Impressed with these tales as a child, Lovecraft doubtless followed Poe in his meticulous planning and emphasis on accurate description.

Poe also left Lovecraft a far more important legacy in the area of realism—that of psychological realism. In addition to carefully thought-out character motivation, Lovecraft learned from Poe the importance of documenting with his prose the mental effects of horror upon his characters. First-person narration is best suited to this, and was thus favored by Poe in such tales as "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Pit and the Pendulum". In these stories the emotional excitement of the narrator—and the frenzy of the style—grows as the horrible events of the tale unfold. This first-person viewpoint, its prose a finely tuned reflection of the narrator's psychic state, is found in nearly three-quarters of Lovecraft's original fiction as well.⁴

Lovecraft has been roundly criticised for his use of subjective adjectives, which were his primary tool for documenting the state of mind of his characters. These critics evidently fail to agree with another of Lovecraft's explicitly stated guidelines for weird fiction:

³Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (1927; final rev. 1936), in *Dagon and Other Macabre Tales* (Saul City, WI: Arkham House, 1965), p. 375. Further references to this volume are in the text, abbreviated as D.

⁴See the Appendix for a list of Lovecraft's stories told in the first person.

In relation to the central wonder, the characters should shew the same overwhelming emotion which similar characters would shew toward such a wonder in real life.⁵

Lovecraft's characters have good reason to become feverish and frantic at what they experience—for example, the realization of man's relative position in a cosmos dominated by vast life forms whom we cannot understand and to whom we are mere ants; or the discovery of an antediluvian city inhabited hundreds of millions of years ago by a race of well-nigh omnipotent cone-shaped beings who accidentally create mankind; or the uncovering of an undeniably prehistoric artifact written in one's own handwriting; or a descent into a twilight grotto whose sea of skeletons and other gruesome artifacts prove that for centuries one's progenitors had practiced cannibalism in a bizarre ritualistic cult. These things are indeed adequate justification for Lovecraft's use of subjective adjectives.

In the last-named example ("The Rats in the Walls") and in several other tales, Lovecraft felt that the horror was such that he had to go beyond simple subjective descriptions, and documented the total collapse of the narrator's sanity with a stream-of-consciousness flood of fragmentary phrases. The atmospheric tensivity of these passages has rarely been equalled in horror fiction—even by Poe, from whom Lovecraft ultimately derived the principle. "The Tell-Tale Heart", for example, is a rather less extreme development of the same type of technique.

Lovecraft's quest for realistic backgrounds also contributed to his frequent use of New England, which he knew and loved so well, as a fictional setting; to the point where some critics have called him a local-colorist. For this we can thank not only Poe but, as Donald R. Burleson has shown, Nathaniel Hawthorne.⁶ The scholarly antiquarianism of M. R. James, whom Lovecraft read at a rather later date, doubtless also reinforced the latter's tendency to include references to actual books (such as the cryptographic reference materials mentioned in "The Dunwich Horror") and other historical detail in his stories.

Beyond Lovecraft's obvious attention to detail, mixing of factual information with fantastic imagination, psychological accuracy, use of "local color", and so on, there is a more basic element which binds these things into a convincing whole: his writing style. Indeed, Lovecraft's prose is the very fabric of the realistic approach which his philosophical orientation impelled him to take with his fiction. For in Lovecraft's prose style lies the realism which we perceive but do not observe when we read his stories, to which we respond without being consciously aware of it. All readers of Lovecraft know the peculiar tone of his narration; the surety, the authoritative voice of his narrators as they recount their in-

⁵Lovecraft, "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction" (1934), in *Uncollected Prose and Poetry III* (West Warwick, RI: Necronomicon Press, 1982), p. 44.

⁶Donald R. Burleson, *H. P. Lovecraft: A Critical Study* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), p. 218.

credible tales. In reading we acquire a subtle trust in the narrator, as much for how he expresses things as for what he is expressing. The deliberate, erudite word choice and phrasing make the reader sense that the narrator is a man of caution and intelligence; this instills in the reader a certain respect for the events to follow. The message of Lovecraft's style is that the narrator's voice is the voice of sanity—even when that sanity is threatened by monstrous intrusions from "Outside".

The force behind the unique and subtle credibility of Lovecraft's narration is what S. T. Joshi has termed the "precision" of Lovecraft's writing style.⁷ This precision is manifest in vocabulary and syntax alike, and serves to reflect both the objective and subjective reactions of the narrator. That the precision and authoritative tone ring true, in an almost subconscious manner, reflects the fact that these qualities are inherent to Lovecraft's style rather than some technique he adopted for use. Lovecraft's unique combination of vocabulary and syntax (or *ideolect*) was shaped, like anyone's, by the linguistic stimuli of his youth. The vast bulk of this stimuli consisted of volumes written in the eighteenth century which he found in his ancestral library. At about age six he "began to choose only such books as were very old—with the 'long s'", and selected as his guide to composition Abner Alden's *The Reader* (1802), "which was in the 'long s', and reflected in all its completeness the Georgian rhetorical tradition of Addison, Pope, and Johnson" (SL II.107f.). Lovecraft himself noted the strength of these influences in his autobiography, "Some Notes on a Nonentity" (1933):

I used to spend long hours in the attic poring over the long-s'd books banished from the library downstairs and unconsciously absorbing the style of Pope and Dr. Johnson as a natural mode of expression. This absorption was doubly strong because of the ill health which rendered school attendance rare and irregular.⁸

Lovecraft's style forever after bore the indelible stamp of these early studies. Louis T. Milic, in *Stylists on Style*, expresses this as follows:

The child acquires language in uneven increments. He learns a great deal during the third year and again when he first goes to school. In general, however, the curve of language learning describes a downward trend. The more he has learned about his language, the less he is able to change. The longer he speaks or writes, the more fixed become the patterns in his active repertory. The older he gets, the less he can modify his style. . . . This progressive hardening or "set" of the style also helps ex-

⁷S. T. Joshi, *Reader's Guide to H. P. Lovecraft* (Mercer Island, WA: Starport House, 1982), p. 62.

⁸Lovecraft, in Jack L. Chalker, ed., *Mirage on Lovecraft: A Literary View* (Baltimore: Jack L. Chalker and Mark Owings, 1965), p. 4.

plain why the writer seems so much at the mercy of his medium.⁹

Milic goes on to stress the inviolability of a writer's idiolect—and, by implication, the early linguistic influences which shape it:

The writer's choice is not really free. As we have seen, his stylistic options are limited by the resources of his idiolect (his active repertory of lexicon and syntax) and by the way this idiolect functions below the surface of his consciousness. Thus, though a writer may state his stylistic preferences, cultivate rhetorical choices he considers effective, or even pattern his style upon models, the essence of his expression, that which is inescapably unique to him, is governed by factors over which he has little control.¹⁰

This passage has great implications on any assessment of Lovecraft's stylistic influences. It seems clear that the writers whom Lovecraft absorbed in his early years, primarily Johnson, Addison, Steele, and Gibbon¹¹ (and also Poe, to whom he became devoted at age eight), are those who shaped his prose style. We can, too, minimize the stylistic effect of Lord Dunsany (whom Lovecraft did not read until he was nearly thirty years old), Machen, et al., upon Lovecraft.

In general, we may say that the traits characteristic of the eighteenth-century writers central to Lovecraft's style are: "philosophick" vocabulary, parallelism, inverted syntax, chiasmus (an inverted symmetry among the elements of two parallel phrases), and antithesis.

Lovecraft's detractors have been quick to vilify his tendency to use "big words", rather than express himself as simply as possible. Yet this tendency, honestly inherited from his influences, did much to give Lovecraft's writing a subtle and very pervasive sense of authority. Referring to Samuel Johnson, W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., describes the effect of the use of general or abstract words which have a scientific or philosophical flavor:

There are certain words for delineating objects which may not denote these any more generically than other words denoting the same objects, but which suggest that the objects are to be thought

⁹Louis T. Milic, *Stylists on Style* (New York: Scribner's, 1969), p. 8. That this passage rings true is also reflected in Lovecraft's astonishing ease in writing rhymed couplets, most impressively shown in the many surviving impromptu poetic book inscriptions and Christmas greetings to his friends. This ability was obviously derived from his very early exposure to poetry; cf. Lovecraft's reminiscences regarding his experiences at age two with the poetess Louise Imogen Guiney, who had him recite nursery rhymes, and also his unusually early fondness for Pope, Dryden, etc.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹¹Lovecraft conveniently identifies these authors as his primary eighteenth-century prose influences at SL I.11.

of as a class rather than individuals; they emphasize by their tone the aspect under which the class is concerned and have little or no connotation of complete appearance or the physical accidentals which clothe individuals of the class. These terms speak as having been coined by men who knew more accurately than common men the precise aspect, or complex of aspects, that constitute the class, who named classes only after studying them with the advantage of vast preliminary erudition.¹²

Thus we find such words as the celebrated "rugose" and "squamous" sprinkled throughout Lovecraft's stories, and to good effect regarding the confidence we have in the narrator's intelligence and judgment. Wimsatt notes, too, that the same sort of impression is made upon the reader, by implication, by more basic word choices made by the writer—the use of "frequently", for example, in place of "often".

Also worth a second glance among Lovecraft's eighteenth-century-derived traits is a syntactical element of extreme frequency, and importance, in his prose. This is parallelism, the repetition of syntactically similar elements. A single sentence from "Hypnos" (1922) supplies several examples:

And when he opened his immense, sunken, and wildly luminous eyes I knew he would be thenceforth my only friend—the only friend of one who had never had a friend before—for I saw that such eyes must have looked fully upon the grandeur and the terror of realms beyond normal consciousness and reality, realms which I had cherished in fancy, but vainly sought. (D 160)

On the simplest level of parallel, there are the words coupled with "and", which is very frequent in Lovecraft. These doubled words, which are a salient characteristic of Johnson's style as well, can be roughly divided into four classes.¹³ They may describe:

- § exact range (i.e., "the grandeur and the terror");
- § illustrative range ("[his voice was] the music of deep viols and of crystalline spheres" [D 161]);
- § different aspects of an object ("low and damnably insistent whine" [D 165]); or
- § overlapping aspects of an object ("the strange and hideous thing" [D 165]).

The last two classes, especially, make for increased emphasis, and predominate in Lovecraft as well as in Johnson.¹⁴ It is sometimes difficult among these four types, as in this example from "The Shunned House" (1924):

¹²W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., *The Prose Style of Samuel Johnson* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 60.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 20. Examples are from "Hypnos".

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 22.

He was at once a devil and a multitude, a charnel house and a pageant.¹⁵

Another type of parallelism important and frequent enough in Lovecraft to mention and evidently derived from this school of writing is anaphora, where the parallel elements begin with the same words or phrase. In the first-quoted sentence from "Hypnos", an example is the phrase beginning with the word "realms". This parallelism likewise makes for increased emphasis, as does the chiasmus centered on the words "only friend".

If in the last analysis Lovecraft had relatively little control over his ideolect, he was well aware of its natural erudition. In many tales he reinforced this characteristic of his writing by giving his narrators positions of responsibility and intelligence; thus the predominance of academics, writers, and men of science we find relating Lovecraft's fantastic narratives (see Appendix). Here (and in Lovecraft's third-person narration also) we get the impression that the storyteller is intelligent enough to be able to distinguish between fact and fallacy, and is not one to be frightened without cause. And when we watch as the narrator becomes more and more upset—sometimes to the point of breaking down entirely—we are most affected by these series of events.

Lovecraft also drew attention to the intelligence—and, by extension, the credibility—of his narrators by contrasting their exposition with that of (ostensibly) common people, and also individuals who have come in contact with outside forces and been utterly deranged as a result. An example of the first kind is found in "Cool Air" (1926):

Anxious to stop the matter at its source, I hastened to the basement to tell the landlady; and was assured by her that the trouble would quickly be set right.

"Doctair Muñoz," she cried as she rushed up the stairs ahead of me, "he have speel hees chemicals. . . . He nevair go out, only on roof, and my boy Esteban he breeng heem hees food and laundry and mediceens and chemicals. My Gawd, the sal-ammoniac that man use for to keep heem cool!"

Mrs. Herrero disappeared up the staircase to the fourth floor, and I returned to my room. (DH 204)

Similarly, there is the narrator's clinical description of Joe Slater's attack in "Beyond the Wall of Sleep" (1919, and a pivotal tale in the development of Lovecraft's prose realism) which contrasts so strikingly with Slater's ravings:

Rushing out into the snow, he had flung his arms aloft and commenced a series of leaps directly upward in the air; the while

¹⁵Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness and Other Novels* (Saul City, WI: Arkham House, 1964), p. 244.

shouting his determination to reach some 'big, big cabin with brightness in the roof and walls and floor, and the loud queer music far away'. As two men of moderate size sought to restrain him, he had struggled with maniacal force and fury, screaming of his desire and need to find and kill a certain 'thing that shines and shakes and laughs'. At length, after temporarily felling one of his detainers with a sudden blow, he had flung himself upon the other in a daemonic ecstasy of bloodthirstiness, shrieking fiendishly that he would 'jump high in the air and burn his way through anything that stopped him'. (D 25)

These two passages seem almost grotesque in their contrast between the reserve and intellect of the narrator and the lack of control of the other characters; but this contrast does serve to reinforce Lovecraft's point: that the narrator is one of exceptional erudition and judgment, and whose word is to be trusted.

We can conclude that Lovecraft's desire for realism in his weird fiction had a large philosophical component. To him, an intellectually acceptable imaginative refuge had to be based solidly in objective fact. Religion did not meet this criterion, earning his disdain because of it. In setting out to create his own fictions, however, he did his utmost to show that their fantastic—though often theoretically possible—events took place in the world which our science knows.

In technique, for both physical and psychological realism, he found his primary model in his literary idol, Edgar Allan Poe. But a great deal of the effectiveness of his realism is derived from other, more unconscious sources, the eighteenth-century writers in whom he immersed himself all through his early life. These elements of philosophical thought, adopted technique, and unconscious influence form a very fortuitous combination. They are the basis of the realism which helps make Lovecraft's tales so credibly terrifying.

APPENDIX

A list of Lovecraft's first-person narratives follows. Occupation of the narrators, when stated, are in parentheses; those inferred are in brackets.

Dagon (supercargo)
Polaris
Beyond the Wall of Sleep (medical interne)
The Transition of Juan Romero (ex-British officer)
The White Ship (lighthouse keeper)
The Statement of Randolph Carter
The Cats of Ulthar
The Temple (Lieutenant-Commander of German Navy)
The Street

From Beyond
Nyarlathotep
The Picture in the House [genealogist]
Ex Oblivione
The Nameless City [archaeologist]
The Moon-Bog
The Outsider
The Music of Erich Zann (student of metaphysics)
Hypnos (sculptor)
What the Moon Brings
The Hound
The Lurking Fear (reporter)
The Rats in the Walls (retired manufacturer)
The Unnamable (weird author)
The Festival
The Shunned House [antiquarian]
He (poet)
In the Vault
Cool Air (journalist)
The Call of Cthulhu [anthropologist?]
Pickman's Model [writer?]
The Silver Key
The Colour out of Space (surveyor)
The Whisperer in Darkness (Professor of Literature)
At the Mountains of Madness (geologist)
The Shadow over Innsmouth [antiquarian]
The Thing on the Doorstep (architect)
The Shadow out of Time (Professor of Economics)

It should be noted that Lovecraft's style gives us the impression that his narrators are men of intelligence and judgment even when they are not explicitly identified as such. This impression holds for his third-person narration as well.

BRIEFLY NOTED

The Necronomicon Press has just issued Ralph Adams Cram's *The Dead Valley*, as the first in a projected series of pamphlets under the title "H. P. Lovecraft's Favourite Horror Stories". Lovecraft praised "The Dead Valley" highly, remarking that it "achieves a memorably potent degree of vague regional horror through subtleties of atmosphere and description". Future pamphlets in this series will include Fiona Macleod's "The Sin-Eater", John Buchan's "The Wind in the Portico", and other obscure works relished by Lovecraft.

Aleister Crowley and H. P. Lovecraft

The Occult Connection

by Barry Leon Bender



n writing this introductory article I hope that the reader will be encouraged to pursue this interesting field of study, for it offers a challenging quest.

On first examination Aleister Crowley and H. P. Lovecraft seem worlds apart. On the one hand Lovecraft was a firm believer in Science and was sceptical regarding the Magical arts. He states in a letter to Maurice W. Moe dated 8 December 1914: "I began seriously with *Science versus Charlatanry*, which I followed up with *The Falsity of Astrology*, but eventually the stupid persistence of the modern Nostradamus forced me to adopt ridicule as my weapon."¹ On the other hand Aleister Crowley used Astrology as a serious character guide to those he came into contact with. Crowley would question Lovecraft's judgment, for he defined his use of Magick as the Method of Science—the Aim of Religion. His definition of Magick itself was: "Magick is the science and art of causing change to occur in conformity with Will." It would have been interesting to have Lovecraft's view on this definition.

The life styles of both men could not have been more different. Crowley was brought up in a strict Plymouth Brethren household. He rebelled against this environment, and claimed as one of his triumphs the seduction of his mother's maid whilst the family were at prayer. He entered Cambridge University where his time was spent writing erotic poetry, mountaineering, and establishing himself as a flamboyant character. He never graduated. By nature he was an exhibitionist and loved publicity. He enjoyed being described by the popular press as "the wickedest man in the world". To the layman his name personified evil and depravity, a reputation he never questioned; but in reality it was highly exaggerated.

Crowley made great use of sexual magick, and the famous Paris working with the young poet Victor Neuberg shocked many people, but its performance was based on a genuine Magickal basis.

Crowley's great aim was to set up a Magickal community, something he did on the Isle of Sicily; the venture was well publicised and his activities luridly described in the press. The final disgrace came when Raoul Loveday, the young husband of a nightclub dancer Betty May, died at the Abbey. She accused Crowley of killing him and the press took her side. In reality Loveday had died through a gastric infection. The press took up Betty May's story and the final outcome was that Crowley had the rare distinction of being expelled from Sicily by Benito Mussolini in 1923. The English press went as far as to accuse him of cannibalism. In retrospect

¹Lovecraft, *Selected Letters I*, p. 4.

one can see that his expulsion was based on rumour. It is important to remember that despite his life style Aleister Crowley is the most important figure in the Western Magickal revival; his work stands head and shoulders above many of his more sombre contemporaries.

H. P. Lovecraft's life style was the total opposite—highly moral, bordering on the puritanical. He was no publicity seeker and his life style would be judged by many to be that of a recluse. He took great pride in his English roots, and became a most ardent Anglophile. His love of English eighteenth-century literature is now legendary. Unlike Crowley he was little known outside a specialist circle in his lifetime, and yet today both men are cult figures, and early editions of their books fetch high prices from collectors.

I must at this stage acknowledge my debt to Kenneth Grant, a former student of Crowley's and leader of the Magickal order *Ordo Templi Orientis* (O.T.O.), though it must be stated that this position is questioned by some. Kenneth Grant has performed a well-researched project into highlighting the Crowley-Lovecraft connection, and yet he is right when he states in *Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God*: "Nowhere in his published or unpublished writing, including his numerous letters, did Lovecraft give any sign of either having read or heard of Aleister Crowley."²

The connection between the two men lies not in their life styles or knowledge of each other, but in their respective ideas—ideas which Crowley expresses in his Magickal philosophy and Lovecraft in his supernatural fiction, especially the tales that have been labelled as the Cthulhu Mythos.

There are many signposts which the perceptive reader can follow in bridging this philosophical connection. Lovecraft acknowledges his debt to the masters of supernatural fiction Arthur Machen and Algernon Blackwood. Both these writers were members of the Golden Dawn, an important Magickal order which was strong in the late nineteenth century in England—true, their roles were only minor ones, but their contemporary Aleister Crowley played a major role in the order. One cannot help thinking that a man of Lovecraft's perception and intelligence would have been aware of this, but if he was he never committed his knowledge to paper.

Lovecraft was familiar with the name of the French occultist Eliphas Levi, and it is interesting that Crowley believed he was the reincarnation of Levi. In a letter to Clark Ashton Smith dated 9 October 1925, Lovecraft wrote:

I bedeck my tale ["The Horror at Red Hook"] with incantations copied from the 'Magic' article in the 9th edition of the *Britannica*, but I'd like to draw on less obvious sources if I knew the right reservoirs to tap. Do you know of any good works on magic & dark mysteries which might furnish fitting ideas and formulae? For example—are there any good translations of any mediaeval necromancers with directions to raising spirits, invoking Lucifer, & all that sort of thing? One hears of lots of names—

²Kenneth Grant, *Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God*, p. 35.

Albertus Magnus, Eliphas Levi, Nicholas Flamel &c.—but most of us are appallingly ignorant of them. I know I am—but fancy you must be better informed. Don't go to any trouble but some time I'd be infinitely grateful for a more or less brief list of magical books—ancient and mediaeval preferred—in English or English translations. Meanwhile let me urge you, as I did over a year ago, to read *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*, by Margaret A. Murray. It ought to be full of inspiration for you.³

It is interesting to note in *Lovecraft's Library* by Joshi and Michaud that item number 778 is Lewis Spence's *An Encyclopedia of Occultism*, a compendium of information on the occult sciences, occult personalities, psychic science, Magic, Demonology, Spiritism and Mysticism. This guide was first published in 1920 and has become a classic reference book, and is still in print today.

Lovecraft's occult rituals have been integrated into the Church of Satan by its flamboyant founder Anton Szandor LaVey, who lives and operates in San Francisco. In his book *The Satanic Rituals* (1972) the eighth part is entitled "The Metaphysics of Lovecraft—The Ceremonies of the Nine Angels" and "The Call to Cthulhu". The ceremonies consist of a sequence of incantations. The fictional deities of Lovecraft are used with great effect by the "Black Pope" in spreading his hedonistic message.

It is interesting to note that LaVey is familiar with the *Magick* of Aleister Crowley, and recognises the connection between Crowley's and Lovecraft's work; and uses both to fit in with his own interpretation of the lefthand path.

Kenneth Grant believes that Lovecraft's occult ideas released themselves in his fiction, and he makes a strong case for this. In *The Magical Revival* he states: "Ideas not acceptable to the everyday mind limited by prejudice and spoiled by a bread-winning education can be made to slip past the censor and by means of the novel, the poem, the short story, be effectively planted in soil that would otherwise reject or destroy them."⁴ Lovecraft's work fits into this slot. The question that has to be asked is: Was Lovecraft the hard-headed materialist he liked to portray, or was there a darker mystical side to his nature that he was afraid to acknowledge? Were these darker thoughts thus expressed in the "safe" world of fiction, a world separated from reality by definition?

The interested reader in attempting to find the answers must compare Crowley's Magical masterpiece *The Book of the Law* with Lovecraft's darker fiction.

The Book of the Law was dictated to Crowley when he visited Cairo in 1904. The astral communicant was Alwaz. It is through this major text that Crowley founded a Magical school of thought of prime importance, and he was to devote his life to interpreting the true meaning of this *magnum opus*.

³H. P. Lovecraft, *Selected Letters II*, p. 28.

⁴Kenneth Grant, *The Magical Revival*, p. 35.

Turning from *The Book of the Law* to Lovecraft's fictional magical text, the *Necronomicon*, the Crowley-Lovecraft connection becomes clearer. Both books had their origin in the Arab world, both are reputedly works of great power. The terminology used is similar—Crowley uses "The Great Ones of the Night Time", Lovecraft uses "The Great Old Ones".

Once again Kenneth Grant's work in the field is invaluable, and to assist readers I quote in full his table of comparisons from pages 115-16 of *The Magical Revival*. It illustrates in detail the similarity of thought between the two writers, and should encourage further investigation.

Barbarous Names of Evocation

H.P.L.

1. Al Azif—The Book of the Arab.
(This book is frequently referred to as all powerful in a magical sense.)
2. The Great Old Ones. (This expression occurs in the Cthulhu Cult stories.)
3. Yog-Sothoth. (A barbarous name to evoke utmost evil.)
4. Gnoph-keh. (The hairy thing; obviously phallic.)
5. The Cold Waste (Kadath).
6. Nyarlathotep. (A god accompanied by "idiot flute players".)
7. Shub-Niggurath: The Goat with a Thousand Young.
8. The overpowering stench associated with Nyarlathotep.
9. Great Cthulhu dead, but dreaming in R'lyeh.
10. Azathoth (the blind and idiot chaos at the centre of infinity).

A.C.

Al vel Legis—The Book of the Law.
(This book is claimed by A.C. to contain the supreme spells. See *Magick*, p. 107.)

The Great Ones of the Night of Time.
(A phrase which occurs repeatedly in the Rituals of the Golden Dawn.)

Sut-Thoth, Sut-Typhon. (A.C. identified his Holy Guardian Angel with Set, considered an abhorrent deity: "Called evil to conceal his holiness.")

Coph-Nia. (A barbarous name in *AL*, probably associated with a phallic concept.)

The Wanderer of the Waste (Hadith).
A title adopted by A.C.

"Into my loneliness comes the sound of a flute." (A.C. in *Liber VII*.)

"I am the hideous God. . . ." Cepus, the Hideous God, blend of dog and bear (Sut-Typhon). (A.C. in *The Book of the Spirit of the Goat*.)

"The perfume of Pan pervading. . . ." (A.C. in *Liber VII*.)

The Primal Sleep, in which the Great Ones of the Night of Time are immersed. Cf. "Pan is not dead, he liveth, Pan!"

Cf. Azoth, the alchemical solvent; Thoth, Mercury: Chaos is Hadith at the centre of Infinity (Nuit).

11. The Faceless One (the God Nyarlathotep).
 12. The five-pointed star carved of grey stone.
 13. Finally Grant astutely points out the comparison between Lovecraft's iridescent globes and those contained in Crowley's green pentagram at the base of his pentacle.
- The Headless One (or the Bornless One, as A.C. called his favourite magical invocation).
- Nuit's Star: the five-pointed star with the circle in the middle. (Grey is the colour of Saturn, the Great Mother of which Nuit is a form.)

Grant makes the important and valid point that "The table is interesting because it shows how similarly and yet how differently reflected were certain archetypal patterns characteristic of the New Aeon. But where to Crowley the motifs conveyed no moral message, to Lovecraft they were instinct with horror and evil."⁵ This is the line that separates the two men's thoughts.

Kenneth Grant continues his important work in his later books, *Cults of the Shadows* (1975) and *Outside the Circles of Time* (1980), which I recommend to the interested reader.

Grant's work should be acknowledged by all Lovecraft scholars because he has highlighted the Crowley-Lovecraft connection with great clarity, and I hope that this article will introduce his work to a wider Lovecraftian audience that up to now has perhaps never considered the interesting link between two very contrasting personalities.

⁵Kenneth Grant, *The Magical Revival*, p. 177. Above table reprinted by permission of Samuel Weiser, Inc., York Beach, ME 03910.

BRIEFLY NOTED

The distinguished German firm of Suhrkamp (Frankfurt am Main) has brought out a fine critical anthology, *Über H. P. Lovecraft* ("On H. P. Lovecraft"), edited by Franz Rottensteiner. This volume is nothing less than a sort of international symposium on Lovecraft, containing essays by critics from America (S. T. Joshi, Fritz Leiber, Dirk W. Mosig, Edmund Wilson, Barton L. St Armand), France (Claude Ernoult, Gilles Menegaldo), Poland (Marek Wydmuch), and Germany (Michael Koseler, Uwe Japp, Jörg Drews, and others). All the articles have been translated into German. At the rear of the volume is a comprehensive bibliography of German Lovecraftiana by Kalju Kirde (a revision of his bibliography in Alpers' *H. P. Lovecraft: Der Poet des Grauens*). The volume is one of the great signals of Lovecraft's high European reputation.

The Development of Lovecraftian Studies, 1971-1982 (Part II)

by S. T. Joshi

[The third and final portion of this essay will be published in the next issue of Lovecraft Studies.]

II. Lovecraft Criticism

A. Biographical

After Derleth's *H. P. L.: A Memoir* (1945) few efforts were made to produce a detailed biographical portrait of Lovecraft; instead, Derleth himself continued to add notes here and there ("Addenda to *H. P. L.: A Memoir*" [1949; III-D-410],¹ *Some Notes on H. P. Lovecraft* [1959; rpt. Necronomicon Press, 1982; III-C-7]), and, more importantly, solicited many memoirs by Lovecraft's surviving colleagues. A lengthy biographical account was produced by Arthur Koki as his M.A. thesis for Columbia, *H. P. Lovecraft: An Introduction to His Life and Writings* (1962), but this significant document was never published and is now of merely historical importance. Koki's view toward his subject was an intelligent and sympathetic one, and there seems to have been nothing standing in the way of publication—at least not from Derleth, who was zealous to protect Lovecraft's character and reputation from detractors. Shortly before his death Derleth was himself contemplating a full-length biography: a volume entitled *H. P. Lovecraft: Notes toward a Biography* was listed as forthcoming from Arkham House in 1970,² and I believe parts of this manuscript survive in the August Derleth Papers at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin in Madison, although I have not had a chance to consult it.

But it is highly unlikely that Derleth would have produced a satisfactory result: although his energy and diligence were boundless (so that he would surely have completed the tome had he lived), he was not in any sense a scholar, and did not have the discipline to sort evidence and do original research. Most of his biographical articles on Lovecraft derive their information from (and in large part are extracts of) Lovecraft's letters to Derleth or to other correspondents—letters which Derleth had at

¹These numbers refer to the entry numbers in my bibliography of Lovecraft (Kent State University Press, 1981).

²See *Thirty Years of Arkham House* (1970), p. 16. In *The Arkham Collector*, No. 10 (Summer 1971), 302, Derleth actually announced that the biography would appear in late 1972, although this is probably another example of his typical optimism regarding the punctuality of Arkham House publications.

hand for the *Selected Letters* project. He knew nothing of Lovecraft's New England background, had not paid much attention to the 1000 pages of Lovecraft's letters to his aunts during his years (1924-26) in New York, and was certainly no literary critic in spite of such works as "The Weird Tale in English since 1890" (III-D-185; a blatant plagiarism, in part, of *Supernatural Horror in Literature*) and *Writing Fiction* (III-D-187). His busy writing schedule precluded the years of uninterrupted study required to produce a comprehensive biography. Recent scholars have maintained that the greatest flaw in Derleth's biography would have been excessive partiality to Lovecraft, but I am no longer certain of this. It is certainly true that Derleth was far from understanding Lovecraft's cosmic viewpoint and philosophical thought in general (but then, I know of no one even now who can claim such understanding), but Derleth's "partiality" was, I think, in general well founded, and based upon personal acquaintance (if only through correspondence); and Derleth would surely not have acted as apologist without providing justification: his rebuttal to Colin Wilson's hostile attacks on Lovecraft (a far more "partial" and prejudiced view than Derleth's, and founded on much weaker ground) in *The Strength to Dream* (1961; III-D-662) was intelligently reasoned and restrained.³ I am honestly sorry that Derleth did not finish his biography, which would at least have been a step in the right direction.

And yet, as in so many other realms, the production of a full-length biography of Lovecraft had to wait until after Derleth's death. L. Sprague de Camp announced in the preface to his *Lovecraft: A Biography* (1975; III-C-5) that he knew of Derleth's plan for a biography, and decided to take up the project himself only upon Derleth's death. De Camp was in many senses more qualified than Derleth to write a biography (although not necessarily a biography of Lovecraft): he was at least a little closer to the ideal of a scholar than Derleth, and, although he too was a prolific and multi-faceted writer, made himself spend three full years in the production of his work. But the result is still a "popular" biography in the sense that it was published by a singularly non-scholarly commercial firm (Doubleday) and designed to capitalise on the growing Lovecraft "fan" movement spurred by the Ballantine paperbacks: it is symptomatic that, in the abridged paperback reissue of the biography by Ballantine (August 1976), the notes, bibliography, and index—nearly the only parts of the book useful to scholars—were dropped. And de Camp's highly confusing system of footnoting made it difficult even for trained scholars to tell precisely what the references for the notes were.⁴ There is no question that a great deal

³See Derleth's preface to Lovecraft's *Dunwich Horror and Others* (1963), pp. xix-xx.

⁴One persistent error that has arisen out of de Camp's footnoting system is the belief that Lovecraft's juvenile poem, "On the Creation of Niggers" (1912; unpublished until my edition of *Saturnalia and Other Poems*, 1984), was published in *The Argosy* (see de Camp, pp. 95 and 455). This was mentioned by B. L. Bender in his thesis on Lovecraft, although for its appearance in *Lovecraft Studies* (Spring/Fall 1981) I corrected it accord-

of scholarly effort was put into the researching and writing of the biography; and although some of the information is erroneous, it is certainly a landmark work and a tribute to de Camp's zeal and diligence. And yet, it is my feeling that much of the criticism directed against it is misplaced, and that its real shortcomings have rarely been touched upon.

And criticism it certainly received. It was only to be expected, of course, that many reviewers who knew little of Lovecraft would either praise it (for the volume certainly looks impressive) or would use it as a springboard for condemning Lovecraft as a hack or lunatic. Of the most astonishingly inept reviews we need only mention those by Christopher Lehmann-Haupt (*New York Times*), Larry McMurtry (*Washington Post*), Ursula LeGuin (*Times Literary Supplement*), and David Sinclair (*London Times*). Of those reviewers who severely criticised de Camp most were either previously acquainted with Lovecraft's work—like Elmer Blistein (*Providence Sunday Journal*), Professor of English at Brown University—or actual Lovecraft scholars—Tom Collins, Fritz Leiber, and especially Dirk W. Mosig. Unfortunately, the reviews of these scholars appeared only in "fan" magazines or science-fiction and fantasy journals, so that their cautionary words have not been heard by the public at large. De Camp, however, felt it worthwhile to rebut some of these attacks, and in *Fantasy Crossroads* (see III-D-140 and 470) conducted a lengthy debate with Mosig (since Derleth's death Lovecraft's foremost defender)—a debate which now reads rather amusingly, since these illustrious figures would often spend pages merely discussing points of grammatical usage and style.

What, precisely, are the failings of the de Camp biography? Certain points are easily noted: the very amateurish literary criticism included in the volume (Barton L. St Armand, when asked what he thought of de Camp's criticism, is said to have replied: "What criticism?"), which went little beyond plot description and easily revealed de Camp's own prejudices for certain facets of Lovecraft's work, as when he compared *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* to Lewis Carroll's Alice books; certain flagrant errors of fact, as when he dated the "History of the *Necronomicon*" (1927) to 1936;⁵ or when he hypothesised a lost novelette by Lovecraft (another mistake which has had a curiously long life), which is nothing more than the extant tale "The Mound";⁶ and things of this sort. But the principal fail-

ingly. Darrell Schweitzer, also misled on this point, believed—when he reviewed my bibliography in *Science Fiction Review*, No. 40 (Fall 1981) 28—that I was actually suppressing the "publication" of the poem in order to whitewash Lovecraft's reputation!

⁵See my afterword to *A History of the Necronomicon* (Necronomicon Press, 1980). I seem to have been the first to ascertain the correct date, for even Kenneth W. Faig was under the impression (based upon SL V.16) that it was written in 1929 or 1930. The relevant passage is SL II.201.

⁶Lin Carter announced, at the 5th World Fantasy Convention in October 1979, his intention of "finding" this novelette for his nascent journal *Weird Tales*; and although I tried at the time to tell him his search was misguided, Carter persisted in the delusion. Recent discussions with him,

ing of de Camp's work (as Mosig intermittently hinted) was de Camp himself. De Camp was so different from Lovecraft in character, motivation, and goals that he could never even remotely understand why Lovecraft did the things he did: de Camp was a "professional" writer and could not understand Lovecraft's "amateur" status; he felt that Lovecraft's fondness for the past was a mere affectation; he was strikingly unable to tell when Lovecraft in his letters and essays was joking and when he was being serious. As de Camp announced in his preface, he felt that he himself was, when younger, actually closer in spirit to Lovecraft; as a result, when he saw Lovecraft doing something which de Camp felt had either led him (de Camp) or would have led him into error, he automatically condemned it in Lovecraft. The result is that de Camp actually becomes too emotionally involved in his subject, and also looks upon Lovecraft as "immature" when he does things that de Camp may have done and regretted in his own youth. This frequent wrist-slapping of Lovecraft becomes rapidly tedious; and yet, most critics of de Camp have not realised that it is not the mere passing of value judgments which is to be condemned (for a purely "objective" biography is neither possible nor desired: it is the duty of a biographer to interpret his subject in the manner he feels appropriate), but rather the making of value judgments based upon incorrect perspective and insufficient evidence. It is perfectly right for a biographer to criticise his subject when he sees that subject doing things which hinder his own happiness and ideals; and de Camp actually feels that Lovecraft frequently does this, but I have never been convinced of it. The startling example of de Camp's misunderstanding of Lovecraft's motives is his condemnation of Lovecraft's "amateur" status: why was Lovecraft, de Camp argues, not more aggressive in the selling of his work? The money thus gained could have relieved Lovecraft's poverty and allowed him wider travel to those antiquarian sites around the Atlantic seaboard he so cherished. Stated in this way, the criticism is entirely just. But what de Camp overlooks is that Lovecraft's gentlemanly status (not a pose in any sense but a social reality to one born in the reign of Victoria in conservative New England) could not allow him to act as a "tradesman" and hawk his work about like a pedlar; and more, Lovecraft stated that it was the sheer act of writing—of capturing images clamouring within the artist to be expressed—which was the aim and end of writing, and actual publication was a distinctly secondary factor. To most of us nowadays these views sound either disastrously antiquated or intolerably "high-brow"; but we should be aware that opinions of this sort have been held in all civilised ages from Periclean Athens to Augustan Rome to Renaissance Italy to Georgian England. And Lovecraft expresses them with a sincerity impossible to ignore save to those who have already made up their minds to the contrary. It is precisely the abandonment of this arbitrary attitude—this act of judging Lovecraft not on his own terms but

however (December 1982), reveal that he has at last realised the vanity of his quest.

on ours—which I have frequently advised.⁷

One of the most vehemently debated subjects raised by the de Camp biography was the issue of Lovecraft's "racism". It was upon this point that Mosig came most strenuously to Lovecraft's defence; but it is not clear whether Mosig quite understood de Camp's position. Mosig's defence—first embodied in a letter to Frank Belknap Long included in Long's *Howard Phillips Lovecraft: Dreamer on the Nightside* (1975) and later in the article "H. P. Lovecraft: Rabid Racist—or Compassionate Gentleman?" (III-D-468)—was based on the following points:

1. Consideration must be taken of the time and place in which Lovecraft lived—the New England of the early decades of the century—since in Lovecraft's day "racist" attitudes were far more prevalent and less objectionable than today;
2. It must be noted that Lovecraft never acted in a racist manner in public, but only recorded his views on paper;
3. Lovecraft's most vehement views on race were expressed in private letters to his aunts never intended for publication;⁸
4. Lovecraft's prime motivation for disliking minorities was that they were helping to destroy the architecture and mores of the past which Lovecraft cherished and felt worth preserving in the name of culture.

Now of these points de Camp was actually aware of the first and alludes to it in passing;⁹ but this did not seem to stop him from making pointlessly extensive quotations and to criticise Lovecraft for his beliefs in a very unhistorical manner. The second point is one to which I give little credence; Mosig wrote: "When did he discriminate, when did he attack, verbally or physically, a member of any minority group? HPL certainly did not behave like a racist in any manner, and it is behavior that counts."¹⁰ But we need not all be Hitlers to be racists; indeed, few racists aside from the Ku Klux Klan ever do take physical action of any sort. And Mosig's emphasis on "behavior" is only a result of his adherence to the psychological school of Behaviourism; and to anyone not agreeing with its tenets behaviour is not "all that counts". The third point is equally irrelevant, and is indeed more damaging to Mosig's case than otherwise: one would assume that Lovecraft is "letting his hair down" and expressing his real feelings to his aunts (who would understand and sympathise with his views) than to other correspondents who had not had the upbringing Lovecraft had. It is simply not true (or at least very unlikely) that Lovecraft merely told his aunts "what they wanted to hear", as Mosig contends. The fourth point is valid enough—it was recognised in a nebulous way even by Der-

⁷See now my *Reader's Guide to H. P. Lovecraft* (1982), p. 7 and footnote 2 (p. 66).

⁸It is to be observed that Derleth published none of the more virulent of these letters to his aunts in the *Selected Letters*, forcing de Camp to unearth them from the archives of the John Hay Library.

⁹See de Camp, pp. 90f.

¹⁰Long, p. 229.

leth¹¹—but is not nearly complete: Lovecraft's views cannot be accounted for merely in this way, and he felt that he had scientific and philosophical justification for maintaining the inherent inferiority of certain races.

It is this last point upon which de Camp and I conducted a brief debate in the pages of *Outré*, edited by the late J. Vernon Shea.¹² In his biography de Camp had put forward the belief that many of Lovecraft's views about race were derived from H. S. Chamberlain's *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*; but de Camp could adduce nothing but internal evidence for the claim. Mosig had already questioned its validity, and some time later I suggested a very simple alternate source for Lovecraft's views—Nietzsche, especially such works as *Twilight of the Idols*. But I was unable to shew at all conclusively that Lovecraft had read Nietzsche much before 1918, at which time his views—or, rather, the scientific and philosophical foundations for them, which was the real issue at hand—had already been solidified. I then observed that Lovecraft cited T. H. Huxley in the early essay "The Crime of the Century" (1915), and am now convinced—although I am not certain de Camp is—that Huxley was the source for his views, especially such books as *Man's Place in Nature* (1902). There is no question, of course, but that Lovecraft's upbringing made him receptive to such views—note the fact that as a boy he had named his cat "Nigger-Man", a perfectly common sort of name at the time—and that other books read earlier than Huxley had provided a nucleus: the early poem "De Triumpho Naturae" (1905) is dedicated to "William Benjamin Smith . . . Author of *The Colour Line: A Brief in Behalf of the Unborn*". But this discovery that the major philosophical source for his views was so respected and brilliant a philosopher as Huxley (and, of course, later Nietzsche—or perhaps misinterpretations of Huxley and Nietzsche, since neither were "racists" in any real sense) may make us wary of passing off Lovecraft's views contemptuously as "pseudo-scientific", as de Camp was wont to do: the fact is that the belief in the natural superiority and inferiority of races was assumed as "proven" by a large segment of the intelligent classes of Lovecraft's day.

And yet, in one way I—as well as Barry L. Bender, the most recent and copious commentator on the subject—have been more "harsh" than even de Camp in the matter of Lovecraft's "racism". Before Bender all critics—de Camp and Mosig included—maintained as a defence of Lovecraft that he discarded many of his attitudes late in life and that his views became more in tune with our own on the subject. Bender boldly challenged this position in his thesis, "Xenophobia in the Life and Work of H. P. Lovecraft" (1980), and produced a crushing weight of evidence which shewed

¹¹See *Some Notes on H. P. Lovecraft* (1959), pp. vi-viii—a really intelligent discussion of the issue.

¹²See *Outré*, No. 11 (October 1978) 79; No. 12 (February 1979) 82-83; No. 13 (May 1979) 79; No. 14 (August 1979) 74-76; No. 15 (October 1979) 58; No. 16 (February 1980) 57-58.

that Lovecraft's "racist" stance was as firmly held at the end of his life as before. I had independently arrived at this conclusion myself,¹³ and think it is incontrovertible; but whereas Bender in his zeal felt that Lovecraft's views remained almost *unchanged* (save in such works as *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, where Lovecraft gives credit to such things as the Jewish horror tradition), I felt that this was too much a swing in the other direction—there is abundant evidence, I think, to justify the belief that Lovecraft's views were *rationalised* and *systematised* as he progressed;¹⁴ and also shifted in focus from a maintenance of "Aryan supremacy" (although this idea was never dropped) to a desire for the preservation of individual culture (whether Western or Eastern, Catholic or Protestant, French or German or English or Japanese) against what I elsewhere¹⁵ called an "amorphous homogeneity" produced by excessive intermixing. This goal of Lovecraft's seems to me entirely defensible—although whether racial segregation is the key to it may not be so certain. My general conclusion is to accept Lovecraft's racial views and not to dismiss them as unimportant¹⁶ (for they are vastly important in understanding not merely his overall philosophy but his literary work as well); but, correspondingly, not to *criticise* or *censure* Lovecraft for them (as de Camp and Bender tend to do), since they were natural products of Lovecraft's upbringing and were later harmonised into Lovecraft's general political and social philosophy. I further advocate the use of the neutral term "racialism" rather than the pejorative "racism" to designate these views in an historical manner.

But whatever its failings, the de Camp biography had one great effect: it exposed Lovecraft to the public eye and to the main trend of literary criticism. The biography received three hardcover printings from Doubleday, a paperback printing from Ballantine, and a hardcover printing from the New English Library. It garnered reviews—sometimes brief, sometimes very lengthy—in such journals as *The Atlantic*, *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Library Journal*, *New York Times*, *Chicago Daily News*, *Science-Fiction Studies*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Publishers' Weekly*, and the newspapers previously mentioned. Indeed, as we shall see shortly, 1975 was the year of Lovecraft's highest critical reputation and popular appeal. Two unfortunate results of the widespread fame of de Camp's book must, however, be noted. Firstly, it prevented the publication of another biography (or perhaps a sort of "literary biography") by Prof. James Merritt, which Willis Conover had announced as forthcoming.¹⁷ I have never seen this work or been in touch with Merritt; but I understand that Merritt's volume was actually completed and had been accepted

¹³See the introduction to my edition of *The Conservative* (forthcoming), written in 1980 before I saw Bender's thesis.

¹⁴See my "Editorial Postscript" to Bender's thesis in *Lovecraft Studies*, 1, No. 5 (Fall 1981) 27-28.

¹⁵H. P. Lovecraft: *Four Decades of Criticism* (1980), p. 14.

¹⁶As Tom Collins does in the introduction to *A Winter Wish*, p. 2.

¹⁷See *Lovecraft at Last*, p. 262.

for publication, but upon the emergence of the de Camp biography in early 1975 the publisher decided to cancel it, and it has not apparently found another publisher. The second consequence is simply a generalisation of the first: the appearance of so formidable and so widely disseminated a work has prevented the emergence of any other such work by a trained Lovecraft scholar, and one can only hope that in a few years a demand will arise again (perhaps through the new Ballantine printings) for a more accurate and well-rounded work. I have frequently been urged to undertake such a task; but not merely is my interest in Lovecraft primarily literary and philosophical, but I would probably only be satisfied with producing a very detailed, multi-volume work not intended for popular consumption. There are several other Lovecraft scholars active who would be fully capable of producing a biography, but none seems inclined to do so.

Of one of these scholars—Kenneth W. Faig, Jr—some further words must be said. Faig, along with Dirk W. Mosig (for whom see Part IIB), may well be the most important figure in the transition of Lovecraftian studies from an avocation undertaken by "fans" to a scholarly discipline. Faig revolutionised the field of Lovecraft biography through some astonishingly fertile work conducted at Brown University during 1971-72, during which he unearthed an enormous amount of primary data from surviving documents, unpublished letters by Lovecraft, and other sources. Some of this information was disseminated through a spate of articles (see III-D-240 to 249) in the fan press since 1971 (especially such notable monuments as "Howard Phillips Lovecraft: The Early Years, 1890-1914", "The Lovecraft Circle: A Glossary", "Lovecraft's Providence", and the long monograph "R. H. Barlow"), but even these voluminous publications (and several other articles still unpublished) do not do justice to the incalculable but largely silent influence of Faig's work upon the rest of the field. Faig actually produced a very large but rather rambling volume filled with his insights, *Lovecraftian Voyages* (III-E-ii-4), but seems never to have made even the effort to secure its publication. Finally, Marc A. Michaud and I decided to put together his work in the form of a small pamphlet, *H. P. Lovecraft: His Life, His Work* (1979). Small as this volume is, it contains a wealth of information not found in books thrice its size. But Faig's real influence was in raising Lovecraft studies to levels of precision and detail never before seen—his example once set, other scholars were compelled to follow suit. Much of Faig's work is now superseded only because other scholars—Mosig, David E. Schultz, Donald R. Burleson, R. Boerem, and myself—have picked up where he left off. There is no question but that de Camp used Faig's *Lovecraftian Voyages* (often with scant acknowledgement) as a factual foundation for large parts of his biography.

Another great but silent figure in Lovecraft studies is R. Alain Everts, who since the early 1960s has made it his task to locate as many of Lovecraft's surviving associates (including his ex-wife Sonia Davis, who died only in 1972) and to interview and collect material from them. The astonishing diligence shewn by Everts has, unfortunately, borne little fruit, largely because of several legal disputes which have occupied his time for the last decade. But Everts knows the details of Lovecraft's life

perhaps as well as anyone, and—although some of his theories and conjectures are rather peculiar—hopes may still be had of significant biographical research from his pen.

Since Derleth's death we have had few important memoirs from Lovecraft's surviving colleagues, and some of the lesser ones—by H. Warner Munn (III-D-483), Vrest Orton,¹⁸ and Samuel Loveman (III-D-407—a bizarre and virulent attack by the aged Loveman, who turned against Lovecraft's memory at the end of his life)—tell us almost nothing new. On an intermediate level are memoirs by Kenneth Sterling (III-D-581) and Wilfred B. Talman (III-C-24). Sterling valiantly defends Lovecraft as writer, thinker, and human being, but fails to tell much about his collaboration with Lovecraft, "In the Walls of Eryx" (1936)—a matter upon which Lovecraft's letters tell equally little. Talman tries—and, I think, succeeds—in portraying Lovecraft as far more normal than he is sometimes made to appear, and reprints some previously unavailable work by Lovecraft. But the two most substantial memoirs—Willis Conover's *Lovecraft at Last* (III-D-414) and Frank Belknap Long's *Howard Phillips Lovecraft: Dreamer on the Night-side* (III-C-18)—require more extensive discussion.

It is these two books, along with the de Camp biography, that made 1975 memorable for Lovecraft studies. Conover's volume—an exquisite monument in book production—also received fairly extensive review, in *The Atlantic*, *The Providence Sunday Journal*, *Library Journal*, *Algo*, *Whispers*, *Publishers' Weekly*, and others—more, perhaps, on Conover's own independent fame than on the subject-matter of the volume, since only the last six months of Lovecraft's life were covered. But these last six months not only saw Lovecraft at the height of his intellectual (though, perhaps due to certain setbacks in the publication of his work, not literary) powers, but presented him as a warm human being in startling contrast to the bumbling and immature racist of de Camp's volume. There is, of course, a certain truth to de Camp's comments that the radical difference in the images of Lovecraft derived from these two volumes stems precisely from this fact that Conover's book covered only this small section of Lovecraft's life while de Camp's covered its whole; but this is only a partial qualification. In the end, however, this book lacks real substance and hard information about Lovecraft; it reminds us of certain ancient biographies—Plutarch's *Julius Caesar*, for example, or the portrait of Tiberius in the early books of Tacitus' *Annals*—where art is placed on a higher level than facts. What we really learn is embodied in Lovecraft's correspondence to Conover, which Conover prints in such a confusing manner (as a simulated conversation between himself and Lovecraft) that it is hard to tell whence these passages derive; it is fortunate that James Turner reprinted much of Lovecraft's correspondence to Conover in a straightforward format in the fifth volume of the *Selected Letters*. We learn much, of course, about Conover's own publishing venture, *Science-Fantasy Correspondent*, and indirectly about the whole world of fantasy fandom in the 1930s—a subject still not thoroughly explored, at least as regards Lovecraft's involvement

¹⁸*Whispers*, 4, Nos. 3/4 (March 1982) 95-101.

in it. And no one can fail to be affected—even jarred—by the poignant account of Lovecraft's final days and death in the hospital.

Frank Belknap Long's *Dreamer on the Nightside* is rather easier to judge, since its virtues and failings are less concealed by elaborate artistry. The volume was received with almost universal disappointment, and I do not believe this was unjustified. From someone who "exchanged numerous letters with him, and met and talked with him at length at least 500 times", and who candidly declares that "I have always felt that I knew Howard Phillips Lovecraft better than anyone else", we are right to expect far more than the meagre and disjointed recollections, interlaced with sadly inept attempts at literary appreciation (it cannot even be called criticism), which make up this deceptively large volume—the largest single memoir of Lovecraft save Conover's. There were, I believe, two reasons for these deficiencies: first, Long's poor memory in describing events which occurred 50 to 55 years before the time of writing (as when he presents Lovecraft, shortly after he came back to Providence in April 1926, discussing "T. S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* [sic] which had only recently [viz., in November 1922] appeared in *The Dial*"); and secondly, what I have been led to understand was Long's motive in writing the volume. Dirk W. Mosig mentioned to me that Long wrote his volume in direct opposition to the de Camp biography, although it is never mentioned by name. If this is true, then he must have written it upon reading a portion of the manuscript of de Camp's book, since Long's volume was already noted as forthcoming in the Arkham House catalogue of September 1974. In any case, there certainly are signs of haste in its composition, and certain veiled polemics scattered through it—as when he writes that "so many totally false assumptions, half-truths, and even malicious fabrications have circulated about HPL in the past decade that a systematic refutation becomes mandatory"; unfortunately, Long was unable to produce that systematic refutation. But apart from the book's manifest failings—the paucity of information provided here that is not found more elaborately in the *Selected Letters*; the weak efforts to reproduce Lovecraft's exact words on a given occasion; a rather silly attempt to produce a sort of posthumous interview session between Long and Lovecraft;¹⁹ the uninformative introductory matter where Long tries to provide a general overview of Lovecraft's life which is both inadequate and erroneous in details—there are certain vignettes which stand out: Lovecraft's elaborate, almost ritualistic attempt to select a fountain pen; his strange allergy which produced a swelling in his hand when he touched some Egyptian objects at the Metropolitan Museum; Long's vivid descriptions of Lovecraft's associates, especially the members of the Kalem Club; and other smaller details. But in this light the volume ill compares with W. Paul Cook's imperishable memoir (III-C-4), which remains the best account of Lovecraft ever written by an associate.

In general there has been little advance in biographical study of

¹⁹Such a "posthumous interview" (actually excerpts from letters and other writings by Lovecraft) has been produced by Peter Cannon, and appears in *The Twilight Zone* for August 1983.

Lovecraft since the de Camp biography, and scholars have almost exclusively turned their attention to the analysis of his work and thought. This is probably for the better; for once the literary world becomes convinced of Lovecraft's enduring merit as a writer and thinker, then biographical investigation will proceed on its own course. Lovecraft's surviving associates are few—a point emphasised with particular poignancy by the deaths of H. Warner Munn and J. Vernon Shea within a month of each other in early 1981—but it is not likely that they have much more to tell us. What is needed now is an even profounder exploration of Lovecraft's mountainous correspondence, both published and unpublished (particularly the invaluable correspondence to his aunts of 1924-26), a more detailed examination of the precise biographical value of such controversial documents as Sonia Davis' memoir, and a thorough exploration of the political, social, and intellectual currents of Lovecraft's time so that his life and actions can be put into historical perspective. In contrast to critical study, no document can be ignored or dispensed with in the study of Lovecraft's life—his own writings, memoirs by friends, primary documents (wills, birth and death notices, etc.), and the like; and the task of synthesising this enormous hoard of information is a daunting one indeed.

BRIEFLY NOTED

Italian Lovecraft studies have recently revived, after a fallow period, under the direction of Claudio De Nardi. Author of several articles on Lovecraft, Machen, and fantasy in general, De Nardi is now at work on an anthology of Lovecraft criticism (similar to S. T. Joshi's *H. P. Lovecraft: Four Decades of Criticism* and Franz Rottensteiner's *Über H. P. Lovecraft*) and also a selection of Lovecraft's letters translated into Italian—the first such volume ever contemplated. De Nardi has also contributed heavily to S. T. Joshi's and L. D. Blackmore's forthcoming supplement to *H. P. Lovecraft and Lovecraft Criticism: An Annotated Bibliography*.

The most elaborate edition of Lovecraft ever undertaken is now emerging from the Japanese publisher Kokusho-Kankokhai. The first two volumes of a projected ten-volume set of the "Works of H. P. Lovecraft" have appeared, containing the fiction from 1897 to 1921 and from 1922 to 1924, respectively. S. T. Joshi has provided his corrected texts as basis for the translation. As critical appendices the first volume contains a Japanese translation of Joshi's "Textual Problems in Lovecraft", and the second contains William Fulwiler's "Reflections on 'The Outsider'"; both these articles originally appeared in *Lovecraft Studies*.

Within the Gates

By "One Sent by Providence"

[Speech delivered by H. P. Lovecraft at a meeting of the National Amateur Press Association in Boston, 4 July 1921.—Ed.]

Mr. Toastmaster, Ladies, Gentlemen, and Politicians:—

Although not called upon by name, I have been informed that the reference to Providence is my cue; hence believe that this is the proper time to make myself ridiculous by attempted oratory. Providence is notable as a dispenser of both blessings and afflictions; the former to be hailed with gratitude, the latter to be borne with patience. I am one of the latter, and can but hope that your patience will prove adequate. Remember, at least, that this oration is not voluntary; and visit your wrath upon Providence—or the Toastmaster—rather than upon me!

The subject of my sermon is announced as "within the gates"—presumably referring to the presence of a strictly United man in the midst of the National's Babylonish revelry—more or less "alien and alone", as it were, to quote from a famous poem dear to the heart of the *Zenith's* scholarly editor. Accordingly I have taken as my text that not unknown line about a gate which appears in the celebrated epic of my fellow-poet Dante—

"All hope abandon, ye who enter here."

I will omit the context—not only because I do not remember it, but because it would perhaps offend some loyal Nationalite by suggesting a certain comparison which I have with truly Heinsian delicacy suppressed.

Having thus introduced my remarks as artistically and verbosely as possible, let me dispense with further preliminaries and confess that I have not the slightest idea of what I should say this evening. This, however, is probably nothing unusual for a post-prandial Cicero or Demosthenes, hence it need cause me no anxiety. I may add, in extenuation, that this is only my second public oration. Having escaped alive after my first, in February, I may venture to hope for similar clemency now—in spite of the representation of the "Sun Group" on the jury.

Since I have nothing in particular to say, it behoves me to say it as tastefully as possible—allowing the appropriateness of my remarks to compensate for their vacuity. Within the gates of—the National, what could be more appropriate than a reference to that institution's chief interest—politics? I could say much of politics, but in a Puritanical city might not be able to say all that recent politics deserves; hence will confine myself to one point—a defence against a recent attack upon me, basely launched by an exceedingly eminent and heretofore respected amateur.

In *Views and Reviews* there appears an outrageous accusation, which although mentioning no names, affects me too obviously to permit of doubt. It is charged that I, as so-called Rhode Island Chairman of some "intensive recruiting drive", employed the backs of National application blanks to write "poetry" on. I take this opportunity to refute so unjust a charge, relying for absolute vindication on Mr. Dowdell; who will, as in the past, assure you all that I never could and never can write a line of genuine poetry! But I will go even further, and vow on my own responsibility that I did not even attempt to write verses on those blanks. My waste-basket contains the proof—for what I did write on them was a descriptive prose article for *Tryout*, which you may read for yourselves in the very next issue—if you are good at puzzles.

Mr. Houtain, noting my weight and elevation, once wrote in *The Zenith* that my voice is seemingly out of keeping with my size. This may or may not be true. If, however, I do not soon conclude, these remarks are likely to be sadly *in* keeping with my elephantine magnitude. I could say much of the honour and pleasure I feel at being present at this momentous conclave, but am reluctant merely to repeat the obvious.

As a text for this long and sonorous intellectual silence I quoted an epic. Let me, therefore, follow the example of the epic poets, and instead of tapering off with a grandiloquent peroration, cease abruptly and dramatically. I have held you within the gates of infernal dulness.

"Thence issuing, we again behold the stars!"

Zen and the Art of Lovecraft

by Donald R. Burleson



he thinking and general *Weltanschauung* of Howard Phillips Lovecraft interact with Zen philosophy in various ways—decidedly in consonance with it in some respects, decidedly at variance with it in others, but sufficiently in consonance with it to allow definite streaks of Zen thought to be discerned in Lovecraft's fiction.

Any treatment of such a topic—the manner in which a given author's works reflect patterns of thought consistent with the Zen outlook—should logically encompass a statement answering the basic question: what is Zen, anyway? And therein lies a fundamental problem: Zen by its very fundamental nature does not lend itself to sharp definition or clear-cut explanation. Any "definitive" encapsulation of the meaning of Zen is sure to fall short of the mark; just as Taoist sage Lao Tzu states, in the opening line of the *Tao Te Ching*, that the Tao which can be spoken of is not the real Tao,¹ any Zen master will be likely to tell us that what is verbally "explained" or "defined" as Zen is not Zen in its most central essence.

Thus one may only "talk around" the nature of Zen. It must be sufficient to point to a few general attitudes commonly found in the thinking of Zen Buddhists, in order to see to what extent this sort of thinking is found in Lovecraft's writing.

Primarily, much of the flavour of Zen is to be found in natural spontaneity—in the attitude that the real "meaning" in reality is ultimately to be found in the non-verbal or preter-verbal understanding that the effortless experience of the present moment is what is real, and that such understanding comes only in a way unfettered by self-consciousness and linguistic and intellectualising analysis. Hence the stories of Buddhist monks who struggle long and unavailingly with intellectual efforts to understand the teachings of their masters, only to awaken one day to what has eluded them, by a slap in the face or by the sound of a gong. Just as a Bach fugue finally must simply be *heard* rather than plumbed for some sort of discursive "content", life to a Zennist must simply be *lived* rather than pondered; one should no more strain or struggle to cope with life than an organist should hurry through a piece by Bach just to get it played and over with, thus missing the point entirely. To a follower of Zen, the present moment and place and activity and perception must form the centre of all existence—one's hearing the stroke of a gong is simply oneself,

¹Lao Tsu (Lao Tzu), *Tao Te Ching*, tr. Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), Book 1. Probably the best English translation.

all that there is, experiencing the sound, all that there is, without comment and perceived in an awareness of cosmic unity, an awareness that the ego-separate-from-environment is misconception, that in looking at the stars one is simply a nerve-ending through which the entire universe is experiencing itself. Beyond such rather peripheral observations, one must simply admit that Zen cannot absolutely be defined; as Wittgenstein says, "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent."² (The interested reader may peruse, nonetheless, some capable "talking around" of Zen in the books of Alan Watts³ and D. T. Suzuki.⁴)

Certainly there are some important ways in which the personal philosophical stance of H. P. Lovecraft differs widely from the views of Zen, with its Taoism-derived attitude that ultimate understanding transcends ratiocination. Lovecraft made it clear that he most admired, among contemporary philosophers, those (like Bertrand Russell) to whom logical analysis and the power of the intellect are supreme. Further, his own letters are crowded with meticulous intellectual argument, and he was known by friends and correspondents to be given to closely reasoned contention as a consistent matter of habit; so that it is difficult to imagine Lovecraft's directly embracing a philosophical view in which intellectualisation is relegated to a secondary post, or is even held responsible for impeding a "higher" understanding. Still, there are attitudes in Lovecraft that are consistent with the Zen outlook.

Lovecraft, as is well known, had no use for religion in any form, Western or Eastern. "Half," he says, "of what Buddha or Christus or Mahomet said is either simple idiocy or downright destructiveness, as applied to the western world of the twentieth century; whilst virtually all of the emotional-imaginative background of assumptions from which they spoke, is now proved to be sheer childish primitiveness" (SL III.47-48). Yet the Zen school, an outgrowth of Mahayana Buddhism as influenced by Chinese Taoism, is so bereft of dogma, of articles of faith in the usual sense of the term, of reliance upon "revealed" textual sources, of the conventional trappings of religion, that some philosophers of religion, Alan Watts among them, doubt whether it can be called a religion at all without encouraging misunderstanding of its nature and function. Certainly Lovecraft would not have disapproved of its lack of an absentee-landlord-style biblical God; many Buddhists incline toward a kind of pantheism—an organic view of the cosmos decidedly different from Lovecraft's view of the universe as a blind and dead mechanism—but the notion of a separate, supernatural creator-God has nothing to do with the practice of Zen, which maintains about such matters a silence insufficiently committal of interest even to be called agnosticism; and had Zen been widely enough known in the

²Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1929), p. 189.

³See Alan Watts: *The Way of Zen*; *The Book (On the Taboo against Knowing Who You Are)*; *In My Own Way* (autobiography); *Tao: The Watercourse Way*; *Beyond Theology*.

⁴See D. T. Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*.

West for Lovecraft to have read of it in his day, it is doubtful that on this score he would have had any essential quarrel with the Zennists, though one supposes he might still have seen their attitudes as unduly mystical because unsupported by intellectual analysis. (Even so, he might well have been interested to read modern accounts of the apparent consistency between science and Oriental "mysticism" currently perceived by some researchers in particle physics.⁵)

Zen is a complex of preter-reflective "attitudes", of spontaneous responses to the world, transcending the necrotic confines of dogmatic religion, and whatever Lovecraft might or might not have thought of it as a philosophy, had he been familiar with it, we may ask the question: in what ways is a Zen world-view suggested, at least at times, in Lovecraft's fiction? It would probably be oblique and Procrustean in the extreme to try to argue that such a view is expressed in anything like a pervasive or consistent way in Lovecraft's fictional works—yet these works do reveal clear instances of what may only be called Zen thought.

On a general level one may look to Lovecraft's personal credo of fantastic fiction. It is well known that he held plot and character development to be secondary artistic concerns, at least in his own work, and that in his writing he attempted primarily to capture and preserve certain oneiric images, impressions, atmospheric feelings that resided in his fancy, or in some cases in his sense-experience. In this respect he comes close to a Zen outlook, for Zennists maintain flashes of feeling or impression or non-intellectual "understanding" are valuable in themselves, defying any attempt at analysis or verbalisation but amounting to true insight or enlightenment for the individual. Lovecraft's constant use of such words as "ineffable" and "unspeakable" and "unutterable" suggests (apart from the idea that some things are too horrible to be described) that his visions are ultimately not to be fully communicated or understood, but rather remain a species of private, non-verbal experience. Whether Lovecraft would have elevated these experiences to the Zennist level of satori—of enlightenment as to ultimate "meaning" to existence—is of course doubtful; but that he had inexpressible flashes of vision, vision in some central way important to him, is scarcely to be denied. To the follower of Zen, these private experiences—the clack of a gourd, the sight of a tree against the sky somehow transversally suggestive—are the very "meaning" of reality, reality which is in the philosophy of non-duality essentially meaningless. Lovecraft would naturally have warmed to the notion that the cosmos is without meaning—but an important difference is that while in Lovecraft's case there is a sort of spirit of resignation to this meaninglessness (Lovecraft having held that in a senseless cosmos one might as well make the best of it, enjoying aesthetic stimuli and the camaraderie of like-minded friends), Zennists express no such sense of resignation, holding, rather, that the universe isn't supposed to "mean" anything in particular, that satori or *kenshō* experiences aren't supposed to be expressible or intellectually ponderable. (Lovecraft, of course, had to try to express his; not to do so is not to be a writer, at least a

⁵See Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics*.

writer of Lovecraft's kind.)

But there are some specific things to be found in Lovecraft's fiction expressive of views consistent with Zen. One of his most self-revealing fictional pieces is "The Silver Key", of which, interestingly enough, he once said, "It was not only non-intellectual but *anti-intellectual*" (SL IV.177). Lovecraft's introspective and disillusioned Randolph Carter here seems to function as a sounding-board for some of Lovecraft's own *ennui*. Carter, upon finally failing to find edification in the prosaic pronouncements of science, is told that he is "immature because he preferred dream-illusions to the illusions of our physical creation."⁶ The tale's narrator is clearly sympathetic in tone to Carter's plight, and at least as a fictional narrative stance this statement of the illusory nature of physical reality is quite in keeping with Hindu-Buddhist-Zen attitudes. Carter goes on to bewail "how shallow, fickle, and meaningless all human aspirations are,"⁷ in consonance with the Zen-Buddhistic notion that grasping, conventional aspiration is a chief source of human misery, and is misconstruction of the nature of reality. Interestingly, Carter has tried to find solace in the "gentle churchly faith" of his fathers, being repelled finally not because that faith is untrue, but because its proponents insist on taking it as meaningful *only* if literally true: he is put off by "the stale and prosy triteness, and the owlish gravity and grotesque claims of solid truth" attached as "earthly reality" to myths for which "misplaced seriousness killed the attachment he might have kept for the ancient creeds" had their advocates been "content to offer the sonorous rites and emotional outlets in their true guise of ethereal fantasy."⁸ These statements would be well received by many followers of Zen, who learn from their masters that a "misplaced seriousness" can indeed be a dead hand on one's throat. Consistent with Zen thinking, too, are Carter's references to "the delusion that life has a meaning apart from that which men dream into it" and to "the secrets of childhood and innocence"⁹—there being a perception among Zen followers that, like animals and trees, children are Buddhistically natural and un-self-conscious, until the superfluous claptrap of life deadens their spontaneous reactions.

Lovecraft similarly refers, in "Celephaïs", to "that world of wonder which was ours before we were wise and unhappy";¹⁰ this work thematically and philosophically adumbrates Lovecraft's novel *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*, and indeed this complex work—a confluence of many of Lovecraft's most cherished ideas, attitudes, and enthusiasms—provides a decidedly Zen-like statement in its ending. Randolph Carter, a Lovecraftian Ulysses who survives numerous episodic horrors in mythic quest of the "sunset city" of his dreams, finally learns from Nyarlathotep the truth that has eluded him like the answer to an unfathomable Zen koan, when the Crawling Chaos

⁶Lovecraft, "The Silver Key", in *At the Mountains of Madness and Other Novels* (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1964), p. 387.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 387-88.

⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 388-89.

¹⁰Lovecraft, "Celephaïs", in *Dagon and Other Macabre Tales* (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1965), p. 61.

tells him: "Your gold and marble city of wonder is only the sum of what you have seen and loved in youth."¹¹ It is the simple beauty of Carter's (Lovecraft's) native New England with its cobbled lanes and antique gables. "These, Randolph Carter, are your city; for they are yourself."¹² Thus Carter learns, like many a Buddhist monk, that he has looked too sedulously and too far afield for enlightenment—that he has carried it within him all along. Biographically, one may speculate that Lovecraft, recently returned from his "exile" in New York when he wrote this experimental novel, may well have perceived (and recorded Randolph Carter as perceiving much the same, metaphorically) that his pursuit of external goals—a marriage, a life in New York, a career as a writer away from Providence—has simply obscured his vision of the potential happiness that was there, in his native city, waiting for him all along to embrace it. However this may be, the ending of this novel cannot but put us in mind of the incident in which the Zen master Po-Chang is said to have been asked, by one of his monks, how one went about seeking one's Buddha-nature; he replied, as legend has it, that to do so, at all, would be like riding out on an ox in search of the ox.¹³ Randolph Carter receives much the same enlightenment from, surely, the strangest Zen master of all.

One might search at length through Lovecraft's fiction to identify other specific Zen-like elements, and no doubt would find some—many are the private visions that peek through, suggestive of things ultimately as ineffable as satori. Suffice it to say that although Lovecraft's professed philosophy is not entirely in consonance with Zen views, his works at times suggest something of the spirit of Zen. It is a pity that we cannot know exactly what Lovecraft would have thought of modern Zen literature. A conversation between Lovecraft and Alan Watts would be highly interesting, but alas—such an exchange is not to be, this side Kadath.

¹¹Lovecraft, *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*, in *At the Mountains of Madness and Other Novels*, p. 379.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 380.

¹³Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (New York: Bantam Books, 1977), p. 111.

BRIEFLY NOTED

New from Necronomicon Press is *The Boiling Point*, a reprint of the column of that name that ran in the early issues of *The Fantasy Fan*. This column, specifically designed to be so provocative and polemical as to bring one's blood to "the boiling point", features an amusing—and, in the end, rather ridiculous—series of letters by Lovecraft, Forrest J. Ackerman, Clark Ashton Smith, R. H. Barlow, August Derleth, and many others on the merits of some of Smith's tales and of fantasy fiction in general. It is a rare glimpse of distinguished writers making fools of themselves.

Reviews

H. P. LOVECRAFT. *Juvenilia: 1895-1905*. Edited by S. T. Joshi. West Warwick, RI: Necronomicon Press, 1984. 40 pp. \$4.95 pb. Reviewed by Robert M. Price.

No doubt some reviewer is at this very moment penning an outraged lament that Lovecraft's juvenilia should ever be hung out, like dirty linen, for public scrutiny. But why not? Making available Lovecraft's kiddie scribbblings does not somehow threaten his reputation, as if any reader were so stupid as to hold the adult HPL responsible for them. The point of publishing these curiosities is simply the fascination of sneaking a peak, as it were, at Lovecraft's literary baby pictures. This collection supplies us with all of his extant writings from Lovecraft's fifth to his fifteenth years (excluding "The Beast in the Cave", already easily accessible in standard editions of Lovecraft's works).

One of the most interesting items is "The Young Folks' Ulysses", young Lovecraft's rhymed retelling of the *Odyssey* in short compass. It was published in 1982 by Soft Books in 200 copies and for \$10. While that booklet was beautifully typeset, one line had been omitted by the printer and, incredibly, handwritten sloppily in between the lines, utterly spoiling the otherwise considerable charm of the booklet. Here it is again with nothing missing, and footnotes to boot.

Juvenilia also contains Lovecraft's translation of the beginning of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This kid was a prodigy. As Joshi points out in his admirably informative introduction, these odd items of prose and poetry allow us to see Lovecraft's later genius in the making. Lovecraft's erudition was unfeigned. His self-education was wide and began early. But these pieces show not only the roots from which the adult Lovecraft sprang: they actually show the later Lovecraft already present in miniature form. Here is Lovecraft the little classicist, the little opponent of industrial modernity, the little racist, the little anti-Semite.

The stumbling attempts at fiction represented here are pretty terrible, but some of the poems have real interest in their own right, not just as biographical fodder. "To the Old Pagan Religion" is a poignant prayer by a devoted Pagan unrepentant in the face of dawning, soon-to-triumph Christianity.

Thanks to Marc A. Michaud and S. T. Joshi of the Necronomicon Press for providing this little jaunt in a Lovecraftian time-machine.

[The date "1895" on the cover of this pamphlet is in error, as there is nothing dating earlier than 1897—the date given in the folio lines—in this booklet.—Ed.]

P. H. CANNON. *Pulptime*. Buffalo, NY: Weirdbook Press, 1984. 93 pp. \$5.00 pb (limited hc printing, \$15.00). Reviewed by Will Murray.

At first blush, a short novel teaming H. P. Lovecraft and Sherlock Holmes, with a sidebar appearance by noted magician Harry Houdini, might seem a curious, if not doubtful, undertaking. While it is true that Lovecraft knew Houdini, and was briefly his ghost-writer, obviously neither man knew the fictitious creation of Arthur Conan Doyle, although Lovecraft, at least, professed to having had a youthful enchantment with the great detective. But as Frank Belknap Long, in his introduction to this work—which is supposed to have been written by him, but was not—notes, both Lovecraft and Holmes were "originals, in the best and most defiant sense of that greatly abused, and often misunderstood, term."

Described as "An apocryphal tale of H. P. Lovecraft and his friends, as if written by Frank Belknap Long, Jr.," this is something more than merely another Sherlock Holmes Meets a Real Person novel. Although satisfying to the Holmes aficionado, this is clearly Lovecraft's story. Set in 1925, the story revolves around Lovecraft's New York City days, and the Kalem Club, as they become embroiled with an aged Sherlock Holmes, who is in America to recover the stolen property of a mysterious client. Painstakingly and plausibly built from known facts, Cannon's portrayal of Lovecraft, as seen through Long's eyes, is unerringly true. Virtually every line of dialogue attributed to H.P.L. can be traced to a Lovecraft letter or familiar anecdote. This, *Pulptime's* greatest achievement, is also, ambiguously, its single identifiable weakness—if it could be called such. A reader not familiar with Lovecraft's *Selected Letters* might not appreciate the artful weaving of fact and fiction, while one too familiar with Lovecraft's quotes could find his fascination with this technique distracts from the story.

But this is a quibble. *Pulptime* works both as an exercise in creative scholarship and as entertainment. Lovecraft's prowlings through the Red Hook section, his encounter with Houdini, and with certain other characters who would, according to Cannon's clever conceit, "inspire" the famous "Horror at Red Hook", will fascinate the Lovecraft fan. Some Holmes scholars may balk at the depiction of a less virile Sherlock Holmes, yet the ending, with its warm revelation of Holmes' nameless client and stolen documents, both explains and forgives everything. And Cannon does a creditable job of telling his tale as if really written by Frank Belknap Long. So telling, that when certain asides appear in the story, as if Long were commenting today on his own dated manuscript, one pauses to wonder if Long in fact did add these asides himself.

Pulptime is an absorbing tale. And not all that unlikely in its intermingling of characters. The very title reminds one of another figure who might have fit into this group with no difficulty: Walter B. Gibson, creator of *The Shadow*, who, during the Twenties, knew Arthur Conan Doyle, ghosted material for Houdini, and who, as editor of *Tales of Magic and Mystery*, accepted Lovecraft's own "Cool Air".

H. P. LOVECRAFT. *The Dunwich Horror and Others*. Selected by August Derleth, with texts edited by S. T. Joshi and an introduction by Robert Bloch. Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, [1984]. \$15.95 hc. Reviewed by David E. Schultz.

Following the Lovecraft boom of the mid-1970s, few important books of Lovecraft's writings have been published. A new printing of *The Dunwich Horror and Others* (Arkham House, 1963) may thus seem not to be significant, but be assured that its appearance constitutes a major event in the history of publication of Lovecraft's works. Readers of *Lovecraft Studies* know of the acute textual problems in Lovecraft's published stories (see S. T. Joshi, "Textual Problems in Lovecraft: A Preliminary Survey", *Lovecraft Studies*, Spring 1982). They are also aware that recent reprints of Lovecraft's stories, though happily making the stories available again, have served only to perpetuate long-standing textual errors and to introduce new ones. We cannot study Lovecraft's writings critically unless accurate texts of his works are available.

The new printing of *The Dunwich Horror*, and new editions of *At the Mountains of Madness* and *Dagon and Other Macabre Tales* forthcoming from Arkham House, present Lovecraft's stories as he wrote them, or as near to that ideal as we can expect to see them. They embody the textual restoration of Lovecraft's writings begun by S. T. Joshi in 1977. We are now, nearly fifty years after Lovecraft's death, able to read his stories as he meant them to be read.

Joshi is to be commended for accomplishing the painstaking task of collating the manuscripts and published appearances of Lovecraft's stories. Having myself prepared a text for Lovecraft's "Commonplace Book", I can assure you that the collation of Lovecraft texts is a tedious and difficult task. Joshi has edited at least 1300 pages of Lovecraft's stories, to say nothing of restorations to other writings that will not soon be published. We are greatly indebted to him and to Arkham House for making Lovecraft's fiction available in the new format.

For the most part, Joshi has consulted surviving manuscripts of stories and early appearances to remove errors that have crept in over the years as well as other editorial tampering. However, not all stories have been restored using Lovecraft's manuscripts. Manuscripts for "The Rats in the Walls", "The Outsider", "The Music of Erich Zann", "The Shadow out of Time" and "The Haunter of the Dark" have not yet been unearthed, so those stories were emended using published appearances from Lovecraft's lifetime. "The Picture in the House" and "The Colour out of Space" were cautiously restored from consultation of surviving typescripts that may not have been prepared by Lovecraft. "The Shadow out of Time" is, as Joshi once pointed out, most certainly incorrectly paragraphed; however, his proposed restoration of the story was not used pending possible discovery of the missing manuscript and was partially emended using Lovecraft's annotated copy of the story as it appeared in the June 1936 *Astounding Stories*.

So what is the significance of the corrected texts? The reader should not expect to see changes so significant as to effect new readings of long

familiar tales (although such changes will be noticeable in *At the Mountains of Madness*). Rather, he will be impressed with a new sense of continuity—of stylistic cohesiveness—that has been annoyingly absent in other printings of Lovecraft's stories. The most obvious changes are those in spellings and punctuation to conform to Lovecraft's preferences. But careful comparison of the new printing to an older printing of *The Dunwich Horror* will show other improvements.

Let us consider, for example, the following reading from the older printing of "The Thing on the Doorstep":

Her home—in that town—was a rather disgusting place. . . .
(p. 287)

In the new printing, the same sentence reads:

Her home in—that town—was a rather disquieting place. . . .
(p. 283)

An inaccuracy such as this is not a trivial matter. August Derleth once rashly remarked that discrepancies in two printings of a Lovecraft piece were of concern only to a "thorough-going scholar". Such a statement is hardly true. Sloppy editorial practices can severely erode a writer's style and credibility. As Lovecraft himself observed, the author is invariably blamed for misprints in his work, not the publisher or the printer.

In the example above, Daniel Upton's response to recollection of Ase-nath Waite's home town is keenly evident in the corrected text. In the first sentence, the bracketing of the entire phrase "in that town" is entirely meaningless and one wonders why the author even included the phrase, much less drew attention to it with dashes. The correct reading is tied deftly to the parenthetical clause "(Derby shuddered as he spoke the name)" in the previous paragraph. In addition, the word "disquieting" is more subtle and evocative—indeed, more *Lovecraftian*—than the sensational word "disgusting". Such restorations, evident throughout the book, indicate that Lovecraft is a much more sensitive and careful stylist than previously known and will be appreciated by all readers, not merely scholars.

One editorial change not made was to the titles of the stories. They are not capitalized in the manner indicated in Joshi's Lovecraft bibliography, based on Lovecraft's own preference (cf. *Lovecraft at Last* (1975), pp. 224-25).

Throughout the book, various sorts of documentary writing have been set in a way that is typographically more pleasing to the eye. The correspondence in "The Whisperer in Darkness" and "The Shadow out of Time", the transcription of the phonograph recordings in "The Whisperer in Darkness", and most especially the newspaper cutting in "The Call of Cthulhu" are all set in a fashion that allows ready recognition of a document within a document. All in all, the new typeface is more readable (though the display type looks a little strange to me).

Besides the new texts, other changes are also evident. Gone is the

old familiar introduction by August Derleth (though Derleth is still credited as the compiler of the book). Its replacement by Robert Bloch is reprinted from *The Best of H. P. Lovecraft: Bloodcurdling Tales of Horror and the Macabre* (New York: Ballantine, 1982). While it was a worthy complement to the paperback collection, one might have preferred a more informative introduction along the lines of Derleth's, but updated to remove errors and to reflect current thinking regarding Lovecraft and his work.

The observant reader will note that there is no date of publication indicated in the book. The book is erroneously and misleadingly called a "Corrected Sixth Printing". The extensive changing of the texts, the deletion of the old subtitle "The Best Supernatural Stories of H. P. Lovecraft", the inclusion of a new introduction and foreword, the resetting of the entire book (and, thus, the changing of all the page numbers) quite obviously make it a new Second Edition. It will also be noted that, like the Ballantine collection, the book is indicated to be copyright 1963 by August Derleth. It appears that Arkham House seeks to perpetuate the myth that it owns the rights to Lovecraft's works, when in fact most of his stories, if not all of them, are in the public domain.

One thing about the book has not changed. Since Arkham House is bringing out Lovecraft's fiction in three volumes, it would have been a simple matter to organize the stories chronologically into three volumes covering his early, middle and late periods. Such organization would have resulted in a mix of good and average stories in each volume. As it is, Arkham House decided, unfortunately, to follow the formats of the fiction books published in the 1960s, which grouped most of Lovecraft's better work into one volume, most of his poorer work into another, and the balance into a book of decidedly uneven quality. Any heightened appreciation of the growth of Lovecraft's narrative power has been overlooked in favor of making the disposal of the last remaining copies of the obsolete printings of his work a simpler logistical problem. It should be noted that the dates of composition of the stories are now provided in the table of contents.

These few quibbles aside, Joshi and Arkham House are to be commended and congratulated for their efforts to publish Lovecraft's work as it deserves to be printed. *The Dunwich Horror* is truly a milestone in Lovecraft studies.

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